

The Times

THE TIMES COMPANY.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1902.

GIVE US THE FACTS.

Our vigorous contemporary, the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, takes us pretty sharply to task for opposing the majority report of the Committee on Corporations in regard to the powers of the proposed Railroad Commission. We think the subject a singularly proper one for discussion, and hope it will be thoroughly ventilated, both in the convention and the press.

With a just regard for one of the essential elements of a reasonable discussion, our contemporary says: "We take it that they (the members of the convention) are 'next' on this proposition, and WANT FACTS, not mere chatter." We say, Amen! And apropos of this we want facts from the Virginian-Pilot on the several propositions they challenge us to deny. We cannot prove a negative; no one is required to do so; but we would be glad for the Virginian-Pilot to furnish the facts upon which it bases its charges. It says:

"We challenge it (The Times) to deny that the railroads of this State discriminate against one shipper and in favor of another, and we further challenge it to deny that there is now absolutely no practical means by which the shipper, discriminated against, can obtain redress. Ought a great common carrier to be allowed to charge one citizen of the Commonwealth a higher rate for a service than it charges another for the same service? Has it any moral, or equitable, right to charge the farmers of the Valley of Virginia a higher rate for freight than it charges the farmer of the Mississippi Valley to Norfolk? What right has a railroad company to depress the business and deplete the property of one town by charging it higher freight rates than it charges another town? All of these abuses, we say, exist in Virginia. We invite The Times, on a plain issue of fact, to deny that they exist and to point out how they may now be corrected."

We have absolutely no knowledge that such a condition of things as our contemporary describes exists in Virginia. If such does exist, we would have expected the violators of the law to be proceeded against under the provisions of the present law to expose the iniquities complained of and enforce the penalty, for under the thirteenth section of the railroad law of Virginia to-day, approved March 3, 1892, it is provided that a violation of the law shall be deemed a misdemeanor, and on conviction the offender shall be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five hundred dollars.

We have some practical acquaintance, as shipper, with the operations of railroads, and we have never suspected the existence of such a state of affairs as our contemporary describes.

We know that the fixing of railroad rates is one of the most difficult problems in modern business and we know that some places like Norfolk are more favorably situated than others, both for railroad and water transportation. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that all places should have exactly the same rates, because they are not justly entitled to them.

It may be, in the great future, that railroad transportation, both of freight and passengers, may be like the postage, or better—the same price to carry you or freight anywhere—or like the five cents on a street car—which may take you a square or five or fifteen miles. But we have not reached that stage yet, and meantime the railroads of Virginia, without the autocratic rule of the three wise men, have given us the lowest rates and best service in the South. What we fear is the inauguration of a wrong principle. The training of our people in the socialist doctrine of looking to the government for everything, it is undemocratic; it is unnecessary. It is, moreover, most unwise to put down a hard and fast method in the Constitution which a brief experience may prove to be very unsatisfactory.

As to supposing that our objections are due to some fear of loss to the stockholders of the railroad, we simply say that it is not in our mind.

We do not believe that the stockholders of the present railroads will suffer, but we do believe that the adoption of the drastic measures proposed will defer outside capital from coming in the State and that their effect will be to mix the powers of government with private interests in a very unwholesome way.

There is nothing more offensive than the arrogation of power, and it was the exercise of their power in our politics by the railroads that so deeply offended a large body of the people of Virginia. We earnestly desire to take them out of politics and keep them out; but the prospect is not cheerful now.

We detect as much as the Virginian-Pilot the iniquities—if such there be—to which it refers, and believe that if the present railroad law is not sufficient to correct them—and we don't know why it is not—it should be so amended as to accomplish this purpose. But what we now want are the FACTS on which our contemporary relies.

Bring them out in detail and particular.

A PHILLO-SOPHIC VIEW.

The Danville Register, in discussing with the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot the question of trusts, says:

"We take it that it is the 'criminal' trust the Pilot is after, the same old-o-the-wisp that all men have a spite at. It is not after the trusts which, if not positively beneficial, are, at least, not 'criminal.' Taking so much for granted, we will state for the Pilot's information that what we said some two weeks ago about trusts in general and the tobacco trust in particular was based upon a statement in the Richmond Times, a paper issued from a tobacco market only second in importance, perhaps, to that of Danville

to the effect that 'the great tobacco trust is overflowing in benefit to the farmers in a way that they would not have believed possible six years ago.' Our observation is that The Times is not a paper that goes off half-cocked. It is conservative, cautious, fair and has reasons for the faith that is in it. We suspect, that, based on that statement upon facts ascertained by observation. This impression is confirmed by observation here. Tobacco is bringing good prices, better than have prevailed for years. If the trust has driven off all competitors, as the Pilot practically alleges, it has been benevolent and liberal enough to pay better prices than usually prevailed before it got into the market, competition or no competition. Our news items from Martinsville, as they appear in this morning's Register, contain the statement that 'tobacco which, two years ago, is now selling at from \$3 to \$8. These facts seem to us to dispose, in general terms, of the categorical questions propounded to us by the Virginian-Pilot. Like the fly in the amber, the impressions which prompted our contemporary's question are not so remarkable about them as how the dickens they got there."

We are not surprised to find this conservative view of the questions in the columns of our Danville contemporary, although no city was originally more opposed to the so-called 'Tobacco Trust' than the city of Danville, and for good reason, for the trust struck Danville a severe blow and practically revolutionized its tobacco industry. But sentiment in Danville has largely changed because conditions have changed, and Danville is now adjusting itself and its varied industries to these new conditions. Danville is still doing a large tobacco business, although it is very much more concentrated. There are fewer tobacco factories and fewer leaf tobacco dealers, because the Tobacco Trust has largely absorbed the business and driven the individual dealer out of the trade. But there is a demand in Danville for every pound of tobacco that is brought in from the country, and the American Tobacco Company and the Continental are giving attention to large numbers of people, and Danville men who were formerly in the tobacco business are now turning their attention to other branches of industry. Many of these men who formerly took a gloomy view of the situation do not hesitate now to say that the Tobacco Trust has been a blessing in disguise, and express the conviction that Danville is in a better condition generally than ever before in its history, with the future full of bright promise.

As for the tobacco planters, they have the comfort of knowing that the Tobacco Trust is more dependent upon them than they upon the trust. What would the trust do without the tobacco planter? It is absurd to say that the trust can go into the producing business and grow its own raw material. It must depend upon the farmer for its supplies of raw tobacco, and it must pay a reasonable price for this product, else the farmer will quit growing tobacco. The farmer can live without the trust, but it is apparent that the trust cannot live without the farmer.

All this goes to prove the contention of The Times for years that this great problem of combination which has been giving the people so much concern will sooner or later solve itself according to the well established laws of trade.

PUBLIC-SPIRITED GALVESTON.

The citizens of Galveston are giving a striking example of what civic pride can do in the face of difficulties that would otherwise be insurmountable. Galveston's credit as a municipality was seriously impaired by the destruction in 1899 of a large amount of assets upon which money could be borrowed, and when it became apparent that an expenditure of at least a million and a quarter would be necessary in order to construct a seawall for the prevention of the recurrence of any such catastrophe as that which the city recently endured, the question of ways and means became at once urgently important.

What the municipality could not do would have remained undone had it not been for the confidence that the people of Galveston had in their own future and their own city. The usual method of selling city bonds was abandoned, and a popular subscription was opened for four per cent. bonds, without appeal being made to sources outside of the city. From one firm and four individuals a quarter of a million was pledged in three days and fifty thousand more has been pledged in sums ranging from fifty dollars to five hundred. The terms of subscription have been made sufficiently easy to place it within the power of all patriotic citizens to subscribe, and with the opportunity has come an extraordinary outburst of civic spirit. The fraternal orders and laboring population are earnestly in favor of the speedy prosecution of the work. For the magnificent natural situation of Galveston has impressed itself on the popular mind as one that needs only some protection against the battering waves of the Gulf in order to insure it a glorious future.

Plans submitted by the engineers call for a sea-wall about three miles in length and seventeen feet above mean low-water mark. This wall will be built of concrete, and it is estimated that it will cost a million and a quarter dollars. Behind the wall at a distance of 200 feet there will be another earthen embankment eighteen feet high, sloping gradually to the level of the hill. This will give an elevation of one and a third feet for the sea-wall and two and a third feet for the earthen wall above the highest point reached by the flood of 1899. Galveston is a great city, because its people are animated by a great spirit. The natural advantages of its situation are considerable, but the public spirit of co-operation is what insures its success for the future. Had the people of Galveston been backward or cowardly the city might well have divided to a mere sand-heap instead of growing, as it will, to one of the great cotton ports of the world.

WHENCE THE DEMAND?

The Petersburg Index-Appeal in discussing the suffrage question says that it has been unable to discover any evidence of sentiment among the people in favor of the so-called 'understanding clause.' 'We are confirmed in this view of the matter,' it adds, 'by the observation of the editor of the Richmond Times, who seems to be making a tour of the State and to

be keeping his eyes open to the educational, industrial and political conditions in the various places he has visited. We note that in several of the very interesting letters he has written to his paper he has put emphasis on the fact that popular sentiment was opposed to an understanding clause in the new Constitution."

If we had been asked without having investigated the matter how the people of Nottoway and the people of Prince Edward and the people of Danville and the people of Halifax stood on this question, we should have said that a large majority of them were in favor of the 'understanding clause.' But the editor of The Times, who spent a day at Blackstone and another at Farmville and two days at Danville and one at South Boston, and talked with all sorts of men in all these places, found no single citizen who was in favor of putting any such clause as this into the Constitution.

We confess to great surprise at the result of these inquiries. In interviewing these citizens of the 'Black Belt' there was no suggestion in the question as to what sort of an answer was expected or desired. There was certainly no purpose on the part of The Times to manufacture sentiment. The sole purpose of these inquiries was to ascertain the sentiment, and while in the short space of time allotted comparatively few men were seen, it is at least significant that the sentiment among those interviewed is all one way.

We are satisfied that some of the politicians would prefer no change whatever in the existing system. Under the Walton law they are managing the negroes well to their liking, and one intelligent man, who has taken a conspicuous part in State politics, said that from a party point of view he thought that it would be a mistake and a serious injury to the Democratic party to make any change whatever. He argued that in some sections of his own county where the whites were poor and much prejudiced against the negro, they were held in line by the race question only, and that if the negro should be eliminated, they would, in his opinion, vote with the Republican party. But the men out of politics said that they were sick and tired of the expedients that had to be used to keep the Democratic party in power, and desired some honest measure which would remove the necessity for this sort of business. They expressed the belief that the 'understanding clause' would simply be another form of the evil.

Now, we ask in all candor, if there is no demand from the 'Black Belt' for a measure of this character, from what quarter, pray, does the demand come?

MR. JAMES CASKIE.

The reputation of Mr. James Caskie for integrity of character and fidelity to the public interest is such that the people of this community cannot easily be persuaded that he was ever derelict in his duty as a member of the City Council. In The Times of Sunday Mr. Caskie made a frank and perfectly clear statement concerning his connection with the sinking fund transaction to which Captain Caird McCarthy referred in a recent speech, and all who have read it are convinced, if any needed to be convinced, that in this instance, as in all instances, Mr. Caskie had only the true interests of the city in view when he acted.

No Councilman has served the city more faithfully, more efficiently, or more unselfishly than Mr. Caskie, and the more his record is exposed, the more apparent will that fact become. Surely, he has no need to make concealments.

The Danville Free Press, which was started as an afternoon paper, will be published on and after this date as a morning paper.

CURRENT TOPICS.

Southern Representation.
The New York Evening Post in discussing the proposal in Congress to 'do something' about the alleged suppression of the vote in the case of the late Mr. Crumpacker's attention to certain statistics to be found in the New York Tribune's almanac. 'Votes on election day,' says the Evening Post, 'are large or small according to the interest which has been felt in the contest. In the case of the late Mr. Crumpacker's district had only 156,739 people, while Mr. Moody's had 189,418; yet the vote in the Eastern District at the Congressional election of two years ago was 52,200—almost twice as great. The disparity between these results is chiefly due to the facts that nobody in Crumpacker's district had the right to vote in the South. Under the apportionment based upon the census of 1890, Mr. Crumpacker's district had only 156,739 people, while Mr. Moody's had 189,418; yet the vote in the Eastern District at the Congressional election of two years ago was 52,200—almost twice as great. 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